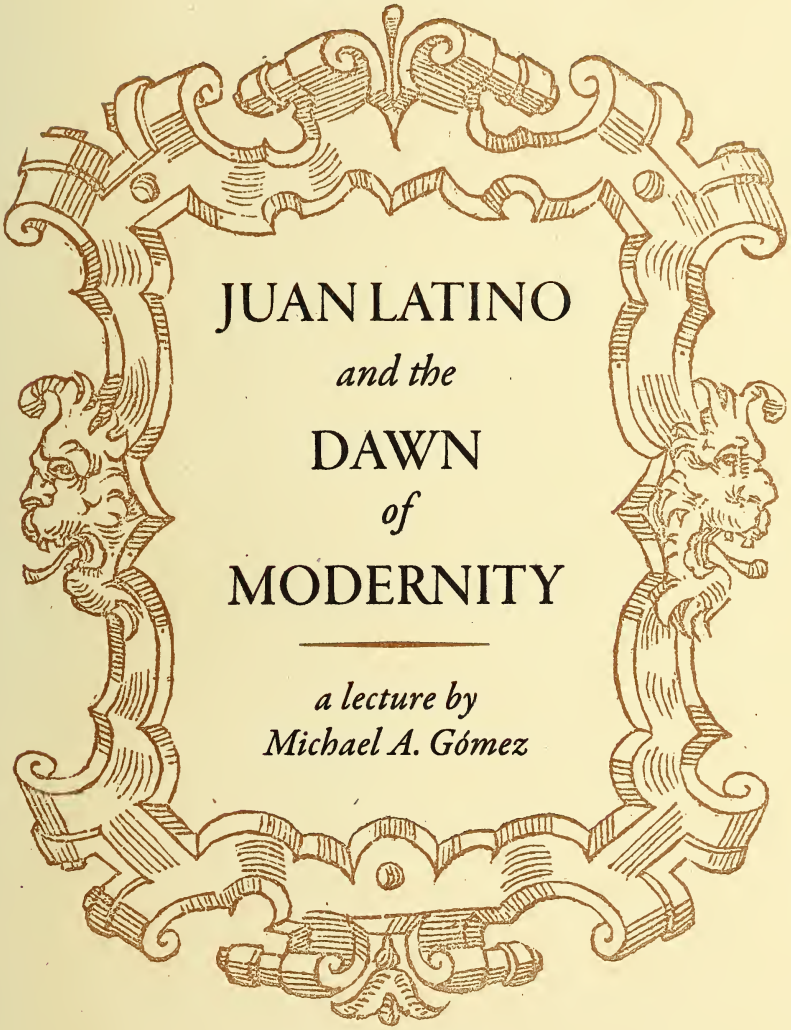
THE SEVEN MILLIONTH VOLUME



JUAN LATINO
and the
DAWN
of
MODERNITY

a lecture by
Michael A. Gómez

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Modernity

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March 20, 2014

THE SEVEN MILLIONTH VOLUME

JUAN LATINO
AD CATHOLICUM PARITER ET
INVICTISSIMUM PHILIPPUM...
PRINTED IN GRANADA IN 1573

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Juan Latino and the Dawn of Modernity

A lecture delivered at the FedEx Global Education Center
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
March 20, 2014

The acquisition of Juan Latino's first book by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as its seven millionth volume is in effect a summons not only to meditate upon the person and his work, but to reconsider the birth of a new world order from a vantage point both unique and unexpected, to view the beginning of a global transformation so thoroughgoing that the world continues to wrestle with its implications. The challenge in seeing the world of Juan Latino is to resist or somehow avoid the optic of the present, because we know what has transpired in the nearly five hundred years since his birth, and that knowledge invariably affects, if not skews our understanding of the person and his times. Though we may not fully succeed, there is much to gain from paying disciplined attention to matters of periodization in the approximation of Juan Latino's world, in the quest to achieve new insights into the human condition. To understand Juan Latino is to grapple with the political, cultural, and social forces, global in nature, that created him. To grasp the significance of Juan Latino is to come to terms with contradiction and contingency, verity and surprise, ambiguity and clarity, conformity and exceptionality. In the end, the life and times of Juan Latino constitute a rare window into the dawn of modernity.

Celebrated as "the first person of sub-Saharan African descent to publish a book of poems in a Western language" (a claim sufficiently qualified as to survive sustained scrutiny), Juan Latino, as he came to be known, was once "Juan de Sessa," the slave of a patrician family in Spain. He came to style himself as "Joannes Latinus," often signing his name as "Magister Latinus," acknowledging his

profession as a teacher of Latin.[1] The changing, shifting nomenclature is as revealing as it is obfuscating. What his name may have been at birth circa 1518 has not been uncovered. Where he may have been born is also unknown and of some contestation. By way of autobiographical ascription, Latino says he "comes from the land of the Ethiopians"; while in his *Antigüedad y Excelencias de Granada*, published in 1608, Bermúdez de Pedraza, an early source for Juan Latino, states that he was born in Berberia, or "Barbary"; and yet in the seventeenth-century play *Juan Latino*, the author Ximénez de Enciso avers that the protagonist was born in Baena, just south of Córdoba in Andalusian Spain.[2] These seemingly divergent and sometimes vague locations, rather than representing a significant obstacle to developing a narrative of the author's life, actually enhance and enrich that narrative, and as will be demonstrated, enjoy a degree of resonance facilitating reconciliation.

Consistently referred to as a "full-blooded African" (as opposed to a *mestizo* or other such descriptors), Juan Latino was apparently the son of an enslaved mother, to whom he was either born in Spain, or with whom he was transported from somewhere in Africa to Spain, probably through Seville.[3] We will return to the question of his birthplace, but it is less consequential than the absence of any further reference to his mother in the sources. Her veritable disappearance is an instructive and critical part of the presentation or packaging of Juan Latino and raises the question of whether she died or was separated from him while he was very young or, even more intriguing, if she may still have been part of his life into his adolescence (and beyond).

The young boy had been enslaved in the household of Don Luiz Fernández, the Count of Cabra, and his spouse, Doña Elvira de Córdoba, and served as the personal valet of their son, Don Gonzalo, the third Duke of Sessa. The two boys were roughly the same age, and at the death of the count in 1530, Doña Elvira moved the family to Granada, where Don Gonzalo is said to have "begun" his studies. Juan de Sessa would have been twelve years old, which seems a bit late for Don Gonzalo to have started his

education, if they were indeed of the same age.[4] In any event, in the course of waiting upon the Duke of Sessa and carrying the latter's books, Juan de Sessa was also paying close attention to the class of Pedro de Mota, which convened at the Cathedral of Granada. Quickly distinguishing himself in Latin and Greek, Juan de Sessa was renamed Juan Latino by admiring classmates.[5] The opportunity to learn in a structured, formal manner and to gain the approbation of his "peers" is reason to pause and imagine the circumstances. As it was Juan Latino and not Don Gonzalo who distinguished himself in studies, the enslaved personal assistant may have initially been "suffered" to study along with his master for the latter's benefit, but was allowed to continue his studies out of recognition of what must have been undeniable talent. As he was apparently still enslaved, we here ford the first brook of incongruity with what we call "Western slavery."

Both Juan Latino and his owner, the third Duke of Sessa, would continue their studies at the University of Granada, recently founded in 1531, an arrangement that was no doubt in the interest of the latter. In 1546 the African received his bachelor's degree, the *bachillerato*, along with thirty-eight other students. He would attain the *licenciado* in 1556, and the master of arts the following year, and between the bachelor's and the master's he would become a husband and father. Here we come to a pair of parallel, unanticipated streams of unpredictability prompting further pause, and it is far from clear which is the more remarkable development. The attainment of advanced degrees is more than sufficient testimony to the individual acumen and determination of Juan Latino, at a time when most human beings in Europe and around the world were largely illiterate. We have a clear challenge in understanding how such distinctions — class insignia reserved for the upper echelon — could have been conferred on someone originally enslaved and highly marginalized by definition. Further compounding the conundrum is his marriage to Ana, daughter of the Licenciado Carlobal, who oversaw the estates of the Duke of Sessa and otherwise held positions of public trust. Don Carlobal had a number of sons who were classmates of Juan

Latino at the University of Granada, but his big mistake, as it were, was to hire Juan Latino to tutor the beautiful Ana in music, and maybe Latin. Though a scholar, Juan Latino was apparently not socially inept, having developed a reputation as a smooth talker, and his combination of wit and interpersonal skills, together with noted musical talent and other qualities, resulted in matrimony, reportedly so contrary to the wishes of Ana's family that her father would die from displeasure. The matter of familial opposition is far from clear, however, as Ana's brothers are clearly implicated in her union with Juan Latino. Between 1549 and 1559, Juan and Ana brought two boys and two girls into the world (and possibly more).[6]

Juan Latino was married to Ana before ecclesiastical authority, their children duly baptized. How to understand this development is not simple, given the expanse between their respective social positions. In fact, several sources maintain that the African was not manumitted before or after the marriage, an assertion straining credulity.[7] Whatever the precise scenario, it is evident that Andalusian Spain was a complex place, in which the demographics were very much in flux but in any event constituted a condition in which subsequent and more familiar conventions concerning race had yet to congeal.

Following the scholarship of A. Marín Ocete, Henry Louis Gates and Maria Wolff argue that in or just after 1566, Juan Latino was awarded the post of Cathedral Professor of Grammar, with privileges at the University of Granada. He had to fight for the position, as one Licenciado Villanueva also sought the post. The name "Villanueva" provides another window into Granada society, as it suggests a Jewish convert to Christianity. Interestingly, Juan Latino won the position with the support of the Archbishop Pedro Guerrero, with whom he had struck a friendship. So once again we have evidence of the African navigating his way up the social ladder and across various minefields with the support of very powerful people.[8]

Renowned as a teacher of Latin grammar, Juan Latino also wrote poetry and apparently translated Virgil into Spanish. His

circle of fellow humanists included the Duke of Sessa along with Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, Gregorio Silvestre, Pedro de Padilla, Luis de Berrio and his son Gonzalo Mateo, Pedro Cáceres y Espinosa, and others, while he lived at a the time of such greats as Fray Luis de León and Fernando de Herrera. Cáceres y Espinosa seems to have afforded Latino a measure of deference, asserting that he was "most learned in Latin and Greek grammar." However, as the occasional butt of jokes he certainly did not occupy a color-blind society; for example, when Latino complained of being overlooked by Silvestre in a group discussion, the latter apologetically replied: "I thought you were the shadow of one of these gentlemen." Gates and Wolff characterize such banter as "racist," but this may represent a backward projection of subsequent sentiment, for as Marín Ocete assesses: "[Juan Latino] was esteemed by everyone, notwithstanding that sometimes his race and color gave rise to kindly jokes from his friends."[9] Fully participatory in the humanist movement in Spain as a writer, Juan Latino also made a significant contribution to humanism as a teacher of Latin by "'turning out, in his classes, numerous Grenadine writers, imitators and translators of the classics, who gave rise to [Spanish] literature's 'Golden Age,'" as Gates and Wolff point out.[10] Later in life he suffered a series of setbacks, beginning in 1576 with the deaths of his patron Archbishop Pedro Guerrero and his wife, Ana, followed two years later by the passing of Don Juan de Austria — leader of the Christian coalition in the Battle of Lepanto, the subject of Latino's poem the *Austrias carmen* — and the loss of his former owner, companion, and probable pupil, the Duke of Sessa. Blind and in failing health, Latino died between 1597 and 1607, possibly approaching ninety years of age, though this is a matter of speculation. In his play, Ximénez de Enciso indicates that Juan Latino had a portrait made of himself, which would be very useful if ever found.

In April of 1569, long before his demise, Latino met Don Juan de Austria, the illegitimate son of Charles V. Don Juan had led the war against the Moors in Granada, and served as the general of the Holy League (the Vatican, Venice, and Spain) in its fight

against the Ottomans, culminating in the Battle of Lepanto in October of 1571. Some 40,000 died in the battle, 25,000 on the side of the Ottomans and another 5,000 of them taken captive, while 24,000 Christian slaves were liberated from the Ottoman galley ships. Eighteen months later, in 1573, Juan Latino would publish the hexameter-verse epic the *Austrias carmen* on this critical event in his first book, *Ad Catholicum pariter et invictissimum Philippum...*, which begins with elegiac couplets on the birth of King Philip's son, Prince Ferdinand, and also includes poems on the Pope and Philip.[11] Latino would have another volume published in 1576, and supposedly a third in 1585, although no copy is known to survive of the latter.[12] The *Austrias carmen*, while centering on the immediate dispute between the Holy League and the Ottomans, alludes to the much longer, epic struggle between Christians and Muslims in the Mediterranean. It is to that larger, protracted struggle that my comments will soon turn, but briefly a bit more about the *Austriad*. Elizabeth Wright cites those scholars who note that a number of Spanish poets saw in the Battle of Lepanto an opportunity to imitate Virgil in his account of the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE, between Gaius Octavius and the forces of Marc Antony and Cleopatra.[13] Juan Latino was one of those Spanish poets, with the Battle of Lepanto central to his 1573 tome. He would be praised for his work by contemporaries Gabriel Rodríguez de Ardila y Escabias, and Cervantes himself, who makes a laudatory reference to him as "black Juan" in the poem "Urganda the Unknown," a preface to *Don Quixote*.[14] Latino would be unfortunately and unfairly subjected to caricature by writers in the following century who, unlike Cervantes, employed the appellation "el Negro Juan Latino" to diminish him.[15] However, in Wright's view, the *Austrias carmen* is no mere act of mimicry, but rather a masterful "re-tooling of an ancient Latin epic" for the purpose of addressing the realities of the Mediterranean in the sixteenth century.[16] It is also her position that neither is the *Austrias carmen* a simple elegy to Don Juan de Austria, but rather it represents a critique of the Crown's harsh and inflexible approach to the Moriscos, Muslims who professed conversion to Christianity,

in the person and via the policies of Pedro de Deza (d. 1600), appointed president of Granada's Chancellery and overseer of "the expulsion of 80,000 Moriscos and the enslavement of another 10,000."[17] The emotional core of the poem, Wright argues, is the sorrow of the two captured sons of Ottoman naval commander Ali Pasha as they catch sight of their father's severed head on a pike, a lament strengthened by the manner in which the poem ends, with the scene shifting to Algiers and the voices of Christian slaves concerned with the implications of the battle for their own fate. As opposed to Fra-Molinero, who argues that in the *Austrias carmen* Juan Latino attempts to promote the Spanish identity as a Christian cultural construct to which his Africanness readily bonds and at the expense of the Moors, Wright views the poem as an identification with the Moriscos' plight, a call for a more tolerant and patient approach to their conversion, and a caution that the conflicts of the Mediterranean would not be successfully resolved through military conquest.[18]

It is no wonder that a Mediterranean world enveloped in centuries-long fighting between Christian and Muslim forces would constitute a focus for Juan Latino, though it is but one of three interlocking spheres of human activity that directly shaped Latino's world and conjunctively illumine his existence, the second being long-distance commercial seafaring, and the third, the transatlantic slave trade. The Mediterranean had been transformed by the rapid and seemingly irrepressible expansion of a new religion, swiftly moving out of the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century and in multiple directions — north into Syria, east into Mesopotamia and Persia and beyond to the Indian subcontinent, and west into Egypt and al-Maghrib (North Africa). As early as 711, Muslim forces had entered al-Andalus, or Iberia, establishing an independent Umayyad Caliphate in Córdoba in 756. The Almoravids would create the "kingdom of the two shores" in the early eleventh century, uniting al-Andalus with al-Maghrib under a single, Muslim authority that would endure into the thirteenth century under the Almohads. For nearly eight hundred years, Muslim powers controlled sizeable but varying portions of

the peninsula, and Muslim forces who would come to be identified as Turks began the quest for control of Rūm or Byzantium, the eastern Roman Empire. Constantinople would fall to the Muslims in 1453, while the houses of Castile and Aragon would coalesce to defeat the remaining bastion of Muslim power in Iberia — Granada — in 1492, expelling the Jews at the same time. The Ottoman Empire was a vast, complicated, unwieldy configuration, while Iberia and the Italian city-states were on the cutting edge of commercial expansion and intellectual endeavor that, to an appreciable degree, were directly informed by their experiences with Muslim scholarship and innovation. Lines had been drawn between powerful Muslim and Christian polities, but the realities of how Christian and Jewish communities experienced Muslim rule under the Ottomans were complex and, in instances, in stark contrast to the more strident and inflexible policies adopted by Christian Iberian powers toward Muslims and Jews.

In his *Austrias carmen*, Juan Latino demonstrates an awareness of the intricacies of his day and evinces sensitivity to the plight of those on the losing end. No doubt this stems from a consideration of his own subjectivity, but in situating himself relative to cultural conflict, Juan Latino exhibits, even personifies the dilemma of diaspora in that he has a stake in the outcome but no clearly defined position in the contest. As a Christian he can understand the position of Spain, but as a slave or former slave he readily understands, at a very profound level, the consequences of loss and defeat. As such, solutions to conflict that are new, different, and capacious are required to move toward resolution not only at the macro, geopolitical register, but also at the level of his individual existence. He seeks to rewrite a social and cultural script to afford himself greater space and avenues of inclusion, reimagining the way forward, as there is no going back to what had been.

The question of race and how it may have affected Juan Latino's thinking will be addressed subsequently, but at this juncture, I would suggest that, though a consideration, race probably was not uppermost in his understanding of his circumstances. Rather, the principal dynamic as it related to international relations was

the cultural divide between Christian, Muslim, and Jew. Indeed, the Mediterranean world of the sixteenth century was an equal opportunity enslaver, in which individuals and groups who found themselves in this unfortunate circumstance instantiated a veritable human potpourri. Captives from both the Reconquista in Iberia and the struggle in the Black Sea region were often sold into slavery, and many were Europeans. The means by which captives were marketed underscores the period's expansive commercial activity, as the Italian city-states of Pisa, Genoa, and Venice, principally involved in trading silk, spices, and sugar in the eastern Mediterranean, also trafficked in war captives in a non-discriminatory fashion. The Genoese sold Christian captives to Muslims, and Muslim captives to Christians, by the thousands, while the Venetians purchased captives from the Caucasus. Many, mostly women, were brought to Italy, where they performed agricultural and domestic tasks left undone by an Italian population reeling from the Black Death. The newly enslaved joined the ranks of the similarly exploited in Crete and Cyprus, but especially in Sicily, southern Italy, Majorca, and southern Spain, where slavery was of a considerable vintage. The enslaved in Sicily were mostly Muslim and, as at Venice and other Italian sites, mostly female.[19]

If the fourteenth century saw increased reliance upon captive labor in the Mediterranean, the fifteenth witnessed changes in the sources of that labor. The re-conquest of Portugal, complete by the time of the Treaty of Badajoz in 1267, signaled the beginning of the end of territorial disputes between Muslims and Christians. Muslim power in Spain also began to gradually decline via battle and treaty. Iberia as a source of servile labor slowed, forcing Europe to turn elsewhere, and by the end of the fourteenth century the demand was largely met by captives from the Black Sea. But with the struggle for Byzantium ending in 1453, and the Reconquista in Iberia culminating in 1492, the northern Mediterranean found itself in need of workers, occasioned in part by the cultivation of sugarcane. Spreading from Southeast Asia to India in antiquity, sugarcane was introduced to Persians and Arabs during Islam's early years. They transferred its production to

Syria and Egypt, and later to North Africa, southern Spain, Sicily, Cyprus, and Crete. European crusaders first came into contact with sugar in the Holy Lands, developing their own sugar plantations in Cyprus, Crete, and Sicily by the early thirteenth century. Europe gradually acquired a taste for sugar (although expensive until the nineteenth century and frequently used for medicinal purposes), having known only honey as a sweetener.

Given this eight-hundred-year context for the Mediterranean, it would have been a challenge for Juan Latino to understand his enslavement principally as a consequence of racial difference, nor would he have experienced "racism" in the way that we currently employ the term. And yet, the sixteenth century, the dawn of Spain's cultural *Siglo de Oro* ("Golden Age"), was also a time of transition into something very different. Moving forward, the world would no longer be solely occupied by the same sets of concerns that previously animated the politics of the Mediterranean, but by new circumstances and realities. Juan Latino stood at the cusp of that new world, one that would greatly expand in scope.

The mechanism by which that new world came into being constitutes the second interlocking sphere of human interaction. Making use of such Indian Ocean innovations as the lateen sail, and benefitting from advances in navigating the Mediterranean and Black Sea, European seafaring improved dramatically, allowing both the Italians and the Portuguese to begin directly accessing the lucrative trade of the Indian Ocean, long an interest of theirs, as opposed to going through the Red Sea and Arabian Peninsula. A desire to eliminate the Muslim middleman, in conjunction with such short-term objectives as securing outlets for West African gold, led the Portuguese and Italians to explore the West African coast during the first half of the fifteenth century. By 1475, the Portuguese had crossed the equator, and by 1488 they had rounded the Cape of Good Hope. The Portuguese were then exporting as many as 700 kilograms of West African gold in a peak year. Vasco da Gama's 1497–1498 voyage signaled Portugal's entrance into the Indian Ocean, and by 1520 the Portuguese were an Indian Ocean power.

This second interlocking sphere of activity, long distance commercial seafaring, was the means by which the world of Mediterranean conflict and sugarcane cultivation joined with a third and final sphere, the transatlantic slave trade. And it was during the lifetime of Juan Latino that all three spheres began to interlock. Busy with gold and empire, the Portuguese also began tapping into West African labor to replace captives from Black Sea and Iberian theaters of war. The Guanches, the indigenous population of the Canaries, were enslaved in both Madeira and the Mediterranean in the early fifteenth century. Lisbon began importing as many as one thousand West Africans annually from 1441 to 1530, from where they were dispersed to southern Spain, Portugal, and elsewhere in the Mediterranean. Madeira, in the North Atlantic, would emerge as Portugal's most important possession with its cultivation of sugarcane, initially with Guanche and then West African mainland labor (as the Guanches were eventually decimated by European diseases). By the 1490s, Madeira was a wealthy colony, exporting sugar throughout Europe and the Mediterranean. In 1495, the planters of Madeira initiated operations in the West African islands of São Tomé and Principe, operations so successful that the Old World slave trade remained numerically dominant until the middle of the sixteenth century. Columbus's 1492 voyage to the "Indies" (to avoid circumnavigating Africa) set into motion a process that, among other things, transferred a system of slavery from the Old World to the New, with Africa a casualty of geography as much as greed.

By 1462, the Portuguese had become veritable slave trading entrepreneurs, supplying Spain with captives as well. Their dependability was such that in 1479 the Treaty of Alcáçovas granted Portugal the right to supply Spain with African captives. The Portuguese brought "cheap" West African captives into Cádiz and Barcelona as well as Valencia and Seville. Importation estimates are uncertain, but Valencia may have received some 5,200 captives between 1477 and 1516, while a 1616 census in Cádiz reveals that West African captives outnumbered North Africans by more than twenty percent. Seville, however, had the largest

concentration of enslaved Africans by 1565 — some 6,327 out of a municipal population of 85,538, and some six percent of a 100,000 total estimate of enslaved persons in Spain. The percentage of West Africans in this total estimate is unknown, but it is clear that the slave trade, after the 1503 establishment of the Casa de Contratación in Seville (a maritime council administering trade with the American colonies), had in sixty years contributed to the population and was a factor in Seville becoming both a "thriving metropolis" and Spain's largest city.[20]

Juan Latino or more precisely his mother was a casualty of that trade, as she would have been the main target of capture. But though sub-Saharan African slavery in Spain was on the rise in the sixteenth century, Juan Latino could never have imagined that by the late nineteenth century some 15 million people would have been exported from Africa via the slave trade. Though noticeable, the rate of increase in enslaved Africans in the sixteenth century would not have been sufficient reason for him to conclude that the sources and reasons for enslavement in the Mediterranean — religious difference and economic exigency — were being replaced by an exclusive association with Africa. Indeed, for the whole of the sixteenth century, Spain imported less than one percent of the total of the transatlantic slave trade, a cumulative estimate that under no circumstances anticipates the trade's subsequent exponential expansion in scope and volume.[21]

And of course, there is no clue as to how Latino viewed his relationship to Africa — he may have celebrated it, he may have disdained it. In claiming to be "originally from Ethiopia," he could have simply been acknowledging obvious phenotypic difference, adopting the term "Ethiopia" to emphasize his love and mastery of Greek (as the term derives from the Greek word *aethiops* meaning "burned face"). Or perhaps, like others who would be enslaved in the Americas, he gravitated to Ethiopia as an idea, a cipher for all Africa, having learned through his studies of antiquity, and possibly sacred scripture, that it enjoyed a level of prominence and respect among world civilizations.

Though the description of Latino as a "full-blooded African" would suggest a West African origin, such cannot be guaranteed, as North Africa is also a possibility. Most West Africans sold by the Portuguese to Spain after 1462 were known as *negros de jalof*, and were also referred to as *gelofes*. This is clearly a reference to the empire of Jolof near the Senegal River, but given the Portuguese area of operation, the reference would include all persons recruited from the Senegal to Sierra Leone, including the Hal Pulaaren or Fulbe. By the end of the fifteenth century *mandingas* (Mande-speakers) from the same general area were also being marketed, while West Central Africans from around the Congo River, called *bantu* by the Lusophones, began arriving in Iberia in 1513. Whatever their origin, these persons were brought to Spain to work: women as domestics and sexual objects, men as "footmen, coachmen, and butlers, while others functioned as stevedores, factory workers, farm laborers, miners, and assistants to their owners in crafts."[22] Others were purchased by the Crown and used in the galleys in construction projects, and although not all galley slaves were West Africans, many were.[23] And many were Muslims, though not all, as Islam did not become the religion of the majority in Senegambia until the reform movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Even so, Islam had long been established in the middle Senegal and Niger valleys and was therefore of considerable vintage in West Africa.

As for the possibility that Latino was North African, the native so-called Berber or Amazigh population ranges in phenotype from very light complexion with straight or wavy hair, to very dark skin with tightly coiled hair, and there are reasons for these differences. Quite aside from anthropological and linguistic evidence placing so-called Negroid populations both in the Sahara and far to the north for millennia prior to the Common Era, a significant proportion of the Almoravid army, which conquered al-Andalus, was West African.[24] In employing West African soldiers in Iberia, the Almoravids were continuing a practice begun by the Umayyads at least since the reign of al-Ḥakam I (ruled 796–822), when they were among the palace guard and the garrisons.[25]

While denying them rank and promotion, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III (912–961), al-Ḥakam II (961–976), and Abū ʿĀmir al-Manṣūr (978–1002) all used "black" troops, al-Ḥakam II even forming a "black honor guard." Enslaved, these soldiers comprised an *ʿabīd*, or servile army, although many were eventually manumitted and merged with other categories of Andalusian Muslim society. The long and extensive interaction between North and West Africans, bond and free, both in Africa and al-Andalus, was such that distinctions between "black" and "white" Africans were often devoid of biological meaning, though often maintained as part of very real social conventions.

Racial ambiguity was further enhanced by social status, occupation, place of residence, and of course Islam. For example, although the vast majority of the Moriscos of sixteenth-century Seville were free, and only a minority enslaved, most of the free Moriscos were impoverished and unskilled, working as stevedores, carriers, and as farm hands. It is very probable, then, that the lives of West African slaves and free Moriscos were not very different, since they essentially performed the same tasks and worked in close proximity. And although the Moorish and Morisco slaves were distinguished as *esclavos blancos*, "Negro, Moorish, and Morisco slaves made up a sizable and conspicuous part of the population of Seville," with West Africans in the servile majority.[26] There was similar interaction between various Muslim communities in Portugal, examples of which include the 1554 case of the *gelofe* "Francisco," who unsuccessfully plotted to escape by sea with "Turkish" slaves "Antônio" and "Pedro"; and the 1564 attempt of the *gelofe* "Antônio" and two other "Turks," equally unsuccessful.[27] So when Bermúdez de Pedraza says that Juan Latino was born in Berberia ("Barbary"), this is entirely possible.

The Portuguese and Spanish were of course well acquainted with Muslims, a diverse assembly of differentiated unequals that included Arabs, Berbers, Arabo-Berbers, and West Africans. Together, they comprised the unwieldy and heterogeneic category referred to as "Moors" by Europeans. Spanish use of the term Moor in the sixteenth century, therefore, was not necessarily

a reference to "race" as it is currently understood. Indeed, Berbers and Arabs had had such extensive "contact with Negroes" that they had "absorbed a considerable amount of color," and at times a dark-skinned Muslim presumed to have hailed from sub-Saharan Africa would be referred to as a *negro alárabe*. Rather, it is more productive to view the term Moor as referring to a *casta* (as opposed to *nación*), a designation that "did not intend to imply a racial factor but rather a cultural characteristic — Islam."[28]

But foreigners could occupy other cultural identities, as was the case with the author of the *Austrias carmen*, who transitioned from his identity as Juan de Sessa, which emphasized his servile status, to that of Juan Latino, in recognition of his linguistic achievements and as initiated by classmates. But the term *ladino*, meaning Latinized, was commonly used to refer to individuals, especially of African descent, who had acquired facility in Portuguese or Spanish, and who also often had connections to Senegambia or Islam, or both. It was therefore not uncommon for the descriptive term of *ladino* to occupy the place of a surname, distinguishing the individual from Moors and Moriscos but also from the African-born who were neither Muslim nor speakers of Spanish or Portuguese, the so-called *bozales* or "raw" Africans. This widespread use of *ladino* may help explain the author's subsequent adoption of Joannes Latinus. As an act of self-definition, self-naming has no parallel, and in that vein the author's expression of re-creation is powerful. His new name clearly communicates a total identification with his intellectual passions, and with the status and recognition derivative of his expertise. But in reinventing himself on the basis of what he does, of his value and utility to the larger society — indeed, in drawing attention to the fact that his new persona is premised on how others see him, and at the "place" where he is even "seen" — his exercise in reconfiguration demonstrates its limitations. Joannes Latinus is, after all, a cultural affectation, unmoored to any land mass or specific location on the planet, or for that matter to any clan or family.

In Joannes Latinus, therefore, we have the essence of the diasporic condition. He is free to re-imagine himself and his world,

but only certain trajectories are possible for him. In Joannes Latinus we do not have the necessary elements for an interaction between African and European cultures and perspectives; his is not a test case for the thesis of enculturation or notions of hybridity, as per every indication he was just a child, if not an infant when taken into captivity. Therefore, unless he remained in intimate connection with his mother, or was in vital contact with groups of Africans in the area, he had no access to a collective past, and no personal memory of African antecedents upon which to draw in his self-refashioning. "Joannes Latinus, originally from Ethiopia," is an imagined subjectivity based almost entirely on achievements and limitations experienced in a context in which his claims are quite tenuous. He is without question privileged — he receives a wonderful education, he is able to make a living teaching the subject he loves, he enjoys the esteem of his fellows, he marries and has a family with a desirable woman of patrician bearing — all of which would seem unattainable for a foreigner, an ex-slave, an African. It is a delicate, contingent condition, a contradiction of sorts, as is arguably his very name.

As an anomaly, he joins the ranks of other exceptional individuals such as Phillis Wheatley (1753–1784), who in all likelihood originated in Senegambia and therefore may have shared that distinction with Juan Latino; as well as her contemporary Olaudah Equiano (1745–1797), who, if indeed he was born in southeastern Nigeria and not South Carolina, also experienced the transatlantic slave trade, only to surmount it.[29] Like Latino, Wheatley distinguished herself as a poet, while Equiano would go on to become a leading abolitionist and labor leader in England, where he also wed a local woman and produced a family. There is no gainsaying that these and others who achieved various levels of notoriety were exceptional, including Muslims who astounded their captors with their literacy in Arabic, often escaping their intended destinies via entirely serendipitous circumstances.

Although aberrant, the Juan Latinos and Phillis Wheatleys are part and parcel of the inconsistencies and contradictions that can be found in the annals of Western slavery. Their visibility is

explained by the fact that they managed to avoid the fate of so many others "of their kind," but in so doing their accounts serve to draw attention to, rather than deflect from, the catastrophe that was the transatlantic slave trade. And in that trade are the seeds of modernity; that is, the dawn of relations and hierarchies of power and privilege across race, class, and gender that begin locally, but, through colonial and imperial expansion, become increasingly more global and entrenched through the tireless search for novel ways of preserving privilege against the claims of the marginalized. Such an objective is often achieved through the creation and cooptation of "middling" or "buffer" classes and their seduction (and the Gramscian concept of "hegemony" is useful here) into notions of race and its privilege, such that the very concept of race is both a product and instrument (if not a weapon) of modernity, along with the ability to absorb critique through its appropriation and commodification. Of course, all of this unfolds in parallel time with the Enlightenment project of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (to which Juan Latino was a precursor), featuring the diminution of unassailable ecclesiastical authority. And while modernity is fundamentally driven by economic considerations, which, in turn, are masked and defended by nationalist formations — such that nationalism is to a considerable degree the creation and mobilization of affinities that mostly benefit the most powerful of interests — by establishing both markets and productivity in multiple sites across national boundaries, those economic imperatives become increasingly unfettered by nationalist concerns, saluting no single flag. These developments have their beginning in the transatlantic slave trade, which allowed for and stimulated forces of production in ways unknown in the Muslim world, leading to an Industrial Revolution and manufacturing capacities with progressively maturing capitalist phases, each of which has as its central organizing principle the commodification of labor, such that even patriarchy and concepts of gender are reconfigured. All of this is set into motion by mass trafficking in African captives.

Juan Latino stood on the threshold of that mass trafficking, in clear contradiction of its nefarious nature, emblematic of the verity that if given the opportunity, the African could achieve in like fashion and similar degree. His accomplishments, unanticipated and unintended, diverge completely from his originally intended destiny. The West would have little interest in producing more like him, as there would be scant investment in the intellectual capacities of Africans. On the other hand, the outlay would be extraordinary in the exploitation of their bodies and labor, after which they could be discarded and forgotten. As a template for the treatment of the poor and defenseless, this approach knows no rival in either the devastation of its effects or the longevity of its intractability. The Wilson Library now has in its possession, in the form of Juan Latino's first book, tangible evidence and exquisite insight into the thoughts and reflections of an African scholar, once enslaved, living in Europe at the dawn of modernity.

1 Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Maria Wolff, "An Overview of Sources on the Life and Work of Juan Latino, the 'Ethiopian Humanist,'" *Research in African Literatures* 29, no. 4 (1998): 14–51; Elizabeth R. Wright, "Narrating the Ineffable Lepanto: The *Austrias Carmen* of Joannes Latinus (Juan Latino)," *Hispanic Review* 77, no. 1 (2009): 71–91.

2 Diego Ximénez de Enciso, *El encubierto y Juan Latino* (Madrid, 1951); Francisco Bermúdez de Pedraza, *Antigüedad y excelencias de Granada* (Madrid, 1608), folio 138.

3 A. Marín Ocete, "El Negro Juan Latino," *Revista de estudios históricos de Granada y su reino* 13 (1925): 97–120, 14 (1925): 25–82; V. B. Spratlin, *Juan Latino, Slave and Humanist* (New York, 1938).

4 Masó has similar reservations: "I believe that, to be raised with the young Duke of Sesa, he [Juan Latino] must have been born a little later [than 1518]." Calixto C. Masó, *Juan Latino: gloria de España y de su raza* (Chicago, 1973), 22.

5 Ximénez de Enciso, *El encubierto y Juan Latino*; Bermúdez de Pedraza, *Antigüedad y excelencias de Granada*, folio 138.

6 Marín Ocete, "El Negro Juan Latino," 16–20; Spratlin, *Juan Latino*, 17; Masó, *Juan Latino*, 25.

7 Ximénez de Enciso, *El encubierto y Juan Latino*; Spratlin, *Juan Latino*.

8 Gates and Wolff, "An Overview of Sources on the Life and Work of Juan Latino," 19–21; Marín Ocete, "El Negro Juan Latino," 23; Spratlin, *Juan Latino*, 19; Wright, "The *Austrias Carmen* of Joannes Latinus (Juan Latino)"; Annette Ivory, "The Struggle of Blacks, Jews, and Moors in Golden Age Spain," *Hispania* 62, no. 4 (1979): 613–18.

9 Gates and Wolff, "An Overview of Sources on the Life and Work of Juan Latino," 21–22; Marín Ocete, "El Negro Juan Latino," 34; Masó, *Juan Latino*, 28; Pedro Cáceres y Espinosa, "Discurso," in *Las obras del famoso poeta Gregorio Silvestre Rodríguez y Mesa* (Lisbon, 1592), folios 10–14.

10 Gates and Wolff, "An Overview of Sources on the Life and Work of Juan Latino," 23–24, quoting from the *Enciclopedia Espasa*, 1023.

11 Joannes Latinus, *Austrias carmen. Ad catholicum pariter et invictissimum Philippum Dei gratia hispaniarum regem . . . Austrias carmen* (Granada, 1573), folios 1–35.

12 Gates and Wolff, "An Overview of Sources on the Life and Work of Juan Latino," 22–23.

13 Wright, "The *Austrias Carmen* of Joannes Latinus (Juan Latino)"; David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton, 1993); Elizabeth B. Davis, *Myth and Identity in the Epic of Imperial Spain* (Columbia, Mo., 2000). Works in which commentary on the *Austrias carmen* may be found include its translation into Spanish by José A. Sánchez Marín, *La Austriada de Juan Latino* (Granada, 1981); and José López de Toro, *Los poetas de Lepanto* (Madrid, 1950), 50–51, 84–85, 93–99.

14 Masó, *Juan Latino*, 37; "Urganda the Unknown," in Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *Don Quixote*, trans. John Ormsby (Project Gutenberg EBook, 2004), http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/996.

15 On the subsequent caricaturing of Juan Latino, see Baltasar Fra-Molinero, *La imagen de los negros en el teatro del Siglo de Oro* (Madrid, 1995).

16 Wright, "The *Austrias Carmen* of Joannes Latinus (Juan Latino)," 75.

17 Ibid., 76.

18 Baltasar Fra-Molinero, "Juan Latino and His Racial Difference," in T.F. Earle and K.J.P. Lowe, eds., *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge, 2005), 326–44; Wright, "The *Austrias Carmen* of Joannes Latinus (Juan Latino)."

19 See Michael Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (Cambridge, 2005).

20 Ruth Pike, *Aristocrats and Traders: Sevillian Society in the Sixteenth Century* (Ithaca, 1972); Leslie B. Rout, Jr., *The African Experience in Spanish America: 1502 to the Present Day* (Cambridge, 1976), 15–16;

Colin Palmer, *Slaves of the White God: Blacks in Mexico, 1570–1650* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), 7–9; Celestino López Martínez, *Mudéjares y moriscos sevillanos* (Seville, 1994); Emiliano Endrek, *El mestizaje en Córdoba: siglo XVIII y principios del XIX* (Córdoba, 1966); David Wheat, "Mediterranean Slavery, New World Transformations: Galley Slaves in the Spanish Caribbean, 1578–1635," *Slavery and Abolition* 31, no. 3 (2010): 327–44; Richard L. Kagan, *Clio and the Crown: The Politics of History in Medieval and Early Modern Spain* (Baltimore, 2009), 46–56; Stafford Poole, *Juan de Ovando: Governing the Spanish Empire in the Reign of Phillip II* (Norman, Oklahoma, 2004); Katie A. Harris, *From Muslim to Christian Granada: Inventing a City's Past in Early Modern Spain* (Baltimore, 2007).

21 This estimate is based on the figures provided by the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, in which 119,961 captives are reported to have entered both Spain and Uruguay from 1501 to 1600; that is approximately one percent of the total 12,521,336 persons estimated to have been exported by the Database. http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/assessment/estimates.faces

22 Rout, *African Experience in Spanish America*, 15–16.

23 Charles Verlinden, *L'esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale*, 2 vols. (Bruge, 1955), 1:842.

24 John O. Hunwick, "African Slaves in the Mediterranean World: A Neglected Aspect of the African Diaspora," in Joseph E. Harris, ed., *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C., 1993), 303.

25 E. Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire de l'Espagne musulmane*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1967), especially vol. 3; Rout, *African Experience in Spanish America*, 13–14.

26 Pike, *Aristocrats and Traders*, 170.

27 James H. Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441–1770* (Chapel Hill and London, 2003), 90–91.

28 Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, "Tribal Origins of Slaves in Mexico," *Journal of Negro History* 31, no. 3 (July 1946): 276–77; Luis del Mármol

Carvajal, *Descripción general de Africa (1573–1599)* (Madrid, 1953); Rolena Adorno and Patrick Pautz, Álvar *Núñez Cabeza de Vaca: His Account, His Life, and the Expedition of Pánfilo de Narváez*, 3 vols. (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1999), 2:414–42; Rukhsana Qamber, *Inquisition Proceedings against Muslims in 16th Century Latin America* (Islamabad, 2007).

29 For Wheatley, see John C. Shields, ed., *The Collected Works of Phillis Wheatley* (New York, 1988); Vincent Carretta, *Phillis Wheatley: Biography of a Genius in Bondage* (Athens, Ga., 2011); Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Trials of Phillis Wheatley: America's First Black Poet and Her Encounters with the Founding Fathers* (New York, 2003). On Equiano, see Olaudah Equiano, *The Life of Olaudah Equiano, or, Gustavus Vassa, the African* (Mineola, N.Y., 1999); Vincent Carretta, *Equiano, the African: Biography of a Self-Made Man* (Athens, Ga., 2005); Paul E. Lovejoy, "Autobiography and Memory: Gustavus Vassa, alias Olaudah Equiano, the African," *Slavery and Abolition* 27, no. 3 (2006): 317–47; Folarin Shyllon, "Olaudah Equiano; Nigerian Abolitionist and First Leader of Africans in Britain," *Journal of African Studies* 4, no. 4 (1977): 433–451.

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